

Administrative Committee
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REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(New York, 23-25 March 1993)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) held its first meeting at United Nations Headquarters from 23 to 25 March 1993. The list of participants is contained in annex I to the present report. The agenda for the session, as adopted by the Committee, is contained in annex II.

I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION

A. Review of subsidiary bodies of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

2. IACSD recommends that:

(a) The Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources should be continued as a single focal point for system-wide coordination in this area. Its terms of reference should be updated to include the implementation of Agenda 21. ^{1/} The Group should undertake this review and report to IACSD. Given that IACSD is responsible for the integrated programme for water resources contained in Agenda 21, the Group should report to that Committee;

(b) The Task Force on Rural Development should be retained, although consideration should be given to reassessing its terms of reference. It should report to the new Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions. On issues relevant to Agenda 21, it could provide inputs to IACSD;

(c) There should be a coordination mechanism for the oceans under IACSD. This should include representation of specialized agencies and financing institutions. The agencies and bodies concerned should meet as soon as possible, taking into account the proposal made by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), based on the special session of the Intersecretariat Committee on Scientific Programmes Relating to Oceanography (ICSPRO) held in September 1992, and any other proposals, with a view to determining the most efficient coordination machinery in this field. Such a meeting should be convened by the Chairman of IACSD. UNESCO has extended an invitation to hold the meeting at its headquarters in Paris.

B. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

3. IACSD recommends that the draft statement contained in annex III be considered and adopted by ACC.

II. DISCUSSIONS HELD BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Allocating and sharing responsibilities for the implementation of Agenda 21 by the United Nations system

4. The Committee had an exchange of views on the coordination of the response of the United Nations system to Agenda 21. The view was expressed that such coordination should encompass global, regional and country levels. It was also suggested that the Committee should focus on achieving concrete results and establish guidelines and principles for inter-agency cooperation rather than micro-manage coordination. Wherever existing arrangements and mechanisms were functioning smoothly there was no need to make any changes and IACSD or the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) would utilize them to the fullest extent. The clustering of the themes of Agenda 21 by the Commission for Sustainable Development at its organizational session and the five-year work programme established by the Commission had provided the Committee with a framework for developing a coordinated United Nations response to the issues identified. In so doing, the Committee would identify issues which needed the attention of ACC.

5. The Committee agreed on the following approach for the allocation and sharing of responsibilities and for improved coordination in the implementation of Agenda 21 by the United Nations system:

(a) At the field level, inter-agency coordination structures will take full account of national and regional objectives of Agenda 21;

(b) At the international level, each organization will pursue the review of its programming and budgetary processes in the light of thematic areas of Agenda 21, with a view to reordering priorities and reorienting existing activities; identifying additional or new activities that should be carried out in response to Agenda 21 and the corresponding financial requirements; and indicating arrangements for cooperation and coordination with other agencies and whether these are adequate or need improvement;

(c) In those instances where reviews by organizations show either wasteful duplication of effort or opportunities for cooperation, consultations will be held to resolve differences and promote joint programming around thematic clusters as defined by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

6. The Chairman suggested that task managers be identified to coordinate with agencies and organizations, in order to prepare inputs for IACSD consideration of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) by the United Nations system on relevant chapters of Agenda 21. The Committee agreed to this suggestion and requested the Chairman to designate task managers for the various chapters of Agenda 21.

B. Review of subsidiary bodies

1. Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources

7. The Committee was briefed by the Secretary of the Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources on its mandate and recent activities. A unanimous view was expressed that the Group had served as a useful mechanism of system-wide coordination in the key area of water resources. It had carried out action-oriented tasks relating to information management, water resources assessment and water planning, and policy and programme formulation. The Group had also served as a mechanism for the drafting of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. It was suggested, however, that the terms of reference of the Group needed to be reviewed in the light of Agenda 21. It was further suggested that the Intersecretariat Group should consider ways of fostering coordination at the country level, with a view to assisting Governments in strengthening the capacity to manage their water resources in an integrated manner, and further that cooperation should be strengthened with the Collaborative Council for Water Supply and Sanitation and other bodies which provided a forum for multilateral and bilateral official institutions, professional groups and non-governmental organizations working in this field.

2. Task Force on Rural Development

8. The Committee was apprised of the views of the new Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions concerning the Task Force. It was agreed to recommend that the Task Force, which had served as a useful mechanism for system-wide coordination in the area of rural development, with a special focus on rural poverty, should be continued. Some members suggested that the terms of reference of the Task Force should be broadened to include both rural and urban poverty in its work. Others, however, felt that appropriate arrangements would be needed to address the larger issue of poverty and that the Task Force should retain its focus on rural development.

3. Coordination in the field of ocean affairs

9. The Committee was informed of the joint proposal of the Director-General of UNESCO and the Secretary-General of WMO to build on ICSPRO in order to establish a mechanism for dealing with broader development issues in the field of ocean affairs within the United Nations system. The view was expressed that, in order to cover the development dimension of ocean affairs, a mechanism was needed whose scope was considerably broader and that its terms of reference should be derived from the needs identified in chapter 17 of Agenda 21. It was agreed that a meeting should be held as soon as possible to consider the proposal made by the Director-General of UNESCO and the Secretary-General of WMO based on the special session of ICSPRO held in September 1992, as well as any other proposals, with a view to determining the most efficient coordination machinery in this field. Such a meeting should be convened by the Chairman of IACSD. UNESCO offered to host the meeting at its headquarters in Paris.

C. Monitoring new and additional financing requirements of organizations of the United Nations system related to Agenda 21, taking into account the decisions of their governing bodies

10. The Committee discussed the financing needs of the United Nations system for activities mandated under Agenda 21. It was agreed that cost estimates contained in Agenda 21 did not need any refinement at this stage. It was recognized that the locus for funding decisions was at the agency level. However, for mobilizing additional resources, particularly for joint programmes and projects, donors preferred to be approached in a coordinated manner. It was noted that effective and visible coordination efforts within the United Nations system would reassure Governments that there was no wasteful duplication and would thus enhance the credibility of the system's efforts to mobilize new and additional resources. It was also emphasized that an improvement in the flow of information should be a key element of coordination. Funding should be sought for programmes driven by the objectives of Agenda 21. The view was expressed that enhanced coordination at the country level could help mobilize resources for activities in the field. In addition, issue-based coordination could prove an effective means of raising resources for actions at the international level. The Committee underscored, once again, the imperative need to relax zero-growth budgetary policies if the United Nations system was to effectively carry out its mandates under Agenda 21.

11. The Committee noted that a number of intergovernmental processes, such as the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of a convention on desertification and the intergovernmental negotiations on chemical safety had been or were being initiated in pursuit of UNCED decisions. The organizations of the system were required to contribute substantively to these processes. The budgetary resources of the agencies and organizations of the system were not adequate for those new activities. Clearly, action is needed in the appropriate governing bodies of the system and by the international community to meet those additional resource requirements.

12. The Committee adopted a draft statement for the consideration of ACC that covered, inter alia, the issue of financing (see annex III, para. 7).

- D. Assessing new and existing reporting requirements related to the implementation of Agenda 21 and making recommendations for their streamlining; arrangements for the preparation of reports requested by the General Assembly for the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, including a report on progress in the incorporation of recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the activities of international organizations and measures undertaken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to ensure that sustainable development principles are incorporated into programmes and processes within the United Nations system

13. With regard to the need for streamlining reporting requirements related to the implementation of Agenda 21, the Committee agreed that a survey of all existing reporting requirements would be carried out and its results would be brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies, as appropriate. Organizations were requested to provide information on the reporting requirements, to the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. The Committee decided to revert to this matter at a subsequent meeting.

14. As for reporting to the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, it was agreed that the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development would draft a report on progress made in the incorporation of UNCED recommendations in the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system on the basis of contributions to be provided by them. The draft statement of ACC to the Commission on Sustainable Development (see annex III) would form the first part of this report.

15. The Committee discussed the reports mandated in General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187. The Committee agreed that these reports had been overtaken by events and recommended that they should be discontinued.

- E. Preparations for the Administrative Committee on Coordination discussion on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

16. The Committee discussed current policy issues in the follow-up to Agenda 21 that would need to be addressed by ACC and adopted a draft statement for the consideration of ACC (annex III).

- F. Preparations for the twenty-seventh series of Joint Meetings of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Committee for Programme and Coordination

17. The Committee was briefed by the United Nations secretariat on the background of the twenty-seventh series of Joint Meetings of CPC and ACC, to be

held in conjunction with the second regular session of ACC in 1993. It was agreed that the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development would prepare a draft background paper identifying issues for discussion at the joint meetings, taking into account the deliberations of the Commission on Sustainable Development, ACC and IACSD. The Committee decided to revert to this matter at its next meeting.

G. Coordination of activities regarding
"Development Watch"

18. The Committee was briefed by the United Nations secretariat on ongoing data-collection and dissemination activities in the field of environment and development. It was agreed that in view of the vast scope and complex nature of this undertaking, some preliminary conceptual work would need to be carried out. The Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, in cooperation with the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, would be requested to undertake expert-level preparations, with the participation of all interested organizations. The Committee decided to revert to this matter at a subsequent meeting.

H. Provisional agenda for the next meeting

19. The Committee approved a provisional agenda for its next meeting (annex IV).

I. Other matters

20. The Committee was briefed by the Chairman on efforts to develop a text-based information system, with the cooperation of the Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems, on decisions of intergovernmental bodies in the economic and social fields that could be shared by the organizations of the system.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8), resolution 1, annex II.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairman: N. DESAI (United Nations)Secretary: S. KHAN (United Nations)United Nations entities and programmes

United Nations

W. Seltzer
T. Hadj-Sadok
A. Smyshlyaev
P. NajlisUnited Nations International Drug
Control Programme

S. Bryant

United Nations Conference on Trade and
DevelopmentC. Fortin
G. KellUnited Nations Environment Programme a/E. Dowdeswell
S. M. Osman
A. Z. Amin

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Development Programme a/G. Edgren
K. Jorgensen
J. J. Graisse

United Nations Population Fund

J. Van Arendonk
S. L. Rao
A. Jurgesen-DahlOffice of the United Nations High Commissioner
for RefugeesA. A. Peters
P. Kourula

World Food Programme

J. Jopling

Specialized agencies and related organizationsInternational Labour Organisation a/M. Chinery-Hesse
G. Minet
L. KohlerFood and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations a/P. J. Mahler
J. S. Camara

United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization a/

G. Glaser
M. Ashraf

International Civil Aviation Organization

C. Hoffmann

World Health Organization a/

N. P. Napalkov
W. Kreisel
A. Joseph

World Bank a/

I. Serageldin
A. Steer
D. J. Pratt
R. Barrett

International Monetary Fund

K. Nashashibi

International Telecommunication Union

A. Laouyane

World Meteorological Organization a/

M. Yerg

International Maritime Organization

J. Wonham

International Fund for Agricultural
Development

A. Kesseba

United Nations Industrial Development
Organization

W. Behrens
B. Karlsson
M. Daniel
S. Halloway
A. O. Lacanlale

* * *

International Atomic Energy Agency a/

M. S. Opelz

* Core member of the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

Annex II

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Allocating and sharing responsibilities for the implementation of Agenda 21 by the United Nations system.
3. Review of subsidiary bodies:
 - (a) Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources;
 - (b) Task Force on Rural Development.
4. Monitoring new and additional financing requirements of organizations of the United Nations system related to Agenda 21, taking into account the decisions of their governing bodies.
5. Assessing new and existing reporting requirements related to the implementation of Agenda 21 and making recommendations for their streamlining; arrangements for the preparation of reports requested by the General Assembly for the first substantive session of the Commission for Sustainable Development, including a report on progress in the incorporation of recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the activities of international organizations and measures undertaken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to ensure that sustainable development principles are incorporated into programmes and processes within the United Nations system.
6. Preparations for the Administrative Committee on Coordination discussion on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
7. Preparations for the Joint Meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Committee for Programme and Coordination.
8. Coordination of activities regarding "Development Watch".
9. Provisional agenda for the next meeting.
10. Other matters.
11. Adoption of the report of the meeting.

Annex III

DRAFT STATEMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE
ON COORDINATION

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) welcomes the establishment of the Commission for Sustainable Development and offers its full support to the Commission in meeting the daunting challenge of achieving sustainable development. It looks forward to policy guidance from the Commission in the process of translating the mandates emanating from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), particularly Agenda 21, into a coherent set of priorities and programmes for the United Nations system.
2. In the short time since UNCED, ACC has initiated actions in various ways and at all levels to follow up UNCED decisions. ACC itself, as the principal inter-agency coordination mechanism for policy decision-making, has placed this question high on its agenda. Existing ACC subsidiary machinery and other inter-agency coordination arrangements are being streamlined and substantially reorganized to achieve greater complementarity and synergy in giving practical shape to the programme areas of Agenda 21. The newly established Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development has met and has launched a process of intensive review of the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system, with a view to enhancing inter-agency coordination and developing an effective response to Agenda 21.
3. The results of UNCED are having a profound and far-reaching effect on the programmes and priorities of the organizations of the system: they are undertaking intensive reviews of their work programmes, reordering their priorities, and wherever feasible, shifting resources in order to concentrate on assisting countries in meeting the key objectives of Agenda 21 in their respective areas of competence.
4. As it begins its first substantive session, ACC wishes to draw the attention of the Commission to the two key issues of (a) coordination of the United Nations system in this field, and (b) financing.
5. Regarding coordination, ACC intends to ensure that existing activities will be oriented to implementing Agenda 21, and the sharing of responsibilities will be defined. The basic challenge will be to achieve more effective country and regional-level coordination as well as to develop closer coordination and cooperation among agencies on specific issues and programmes. To these ends, the following process will be pursued:
 - (a) At the field level, inter-agency coordination structures will take full account of national and regional objectives of Agenda 21;
 - (b) At the international level, each organization will pursue the review of its programming and budgetary processes in the light of thematic areas of Agenda 21, with a view to reordering priorities and reorienting existing activities; identifying additional or new activities that should be carried out in response to Agenda 21 and the corresponding financial requirements; and

indicating how arrangements can be made for cooperation and coordination with other agencies and whether these are adequate or need improvement;

(c) In instances where these reviews by organizations show either wasteful duplication of effort or opportunities for cooperation, consultations will be held to resolve differences and promote joint programming around the thematic clusters defined by the Commission for Sustainable Development.

6. The Commission will continue to be apprised of measures undertaken by ACC to ensure that sustainable development principles are incorporated into programmes and processes within the United Nations system and will also monitor progress achieved in the incorporation of UNCED recommendations in the activities of organizations of the United Nations.

7. ACC notes with concern the slow progress achieved thus far in initiating the implementation of Agenda 21. The commitments undertaken at UNCED have not been followed by commensurate actions for their realization. In this regard, the lack of adequate financing is a principal constraint in all countries. Renewed political will and concerted action will be needed to overcome this constraint.

8. The United Nations system has been called upon to assist countries in fulfilling the objectives of Agenda 21. As stated earlier, ACC has initiated a number of steps to mobilize the energies and experience of the system for a coherent and coordinated response to this vast and complex challenge. Every effort is being made to enhance the efficiency of resource use through more effective coordination at the country, regional and global levels, as well as the utilization of possibilities for cooperation to achieve synergy. Nevertheless, the imperative need to provide additional funding to meet the new mandates stemming from Agenda 21 must be recognized. ACC notes with concern that despite the commitments undertaken at UNCED, funding for mandated programmes has not been forthcoming. In particular, the replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA), has fallen short of expectations.

9. It is essential that the replenishment of IDA and the Global Environment Facility, as well as the financing of the Capacity 21 Initiative and the Environment Fund of the United Nations Environment Programme be at an adequate level. ACC further notes the great need for financing of activities at country and local levels, which remains unmet. This gap needs to be bridged urgently if the sustainable development objectives of UNCED are to be realized.

10. A number of intergovernmental processes, such as the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of a convention on desertification and the intergovernmental negotiations on chemical safety, have been or are being initiated in pursuit of the decisions of UNCED. The organizations of the system are required to contribute substantively to these processes. The budgetary resources of the agencies and organizations of the system are not adequate for these new activities. Clearly, action is needed in the appropriate governing bodies of the system and by the international community to meet these additional resource requirements.

11. In conclusion, ACC wishes to renew its commitment to meet the challenge of promoting sustainable development. It recognizes the critical role of the United Nations system as the global framework for realizing the objectives of Agenda 21. ACC underlines, once again, the importance of ensuring a coherent, well coordinated and adequate response to this challenge on the part of the United Nations system. It reiterates its determination to undertake all necessary steps towards this objective. The full support of Governments will be critical to the success of this endeavour. ACC looks forward to such support.

Annex IV

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE SECOND MEETING OF THE
INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Matters arising from meetings of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission for Sustainable Development and other intergovernmental bodies.
3. Matters arising from meetings of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and preparations for the Administrative Committee on Coordination discussions on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
4. Allocating and sharing responsibilities for the implementation of Agenda 21 by the United Nations system.
5. Monitoring new and additional financing requirements of organizations of the United Nations system related to Agenda 21, taking into account the decisions of their governing bodies.
6. Assessing new and existing reporting requirements related to the implementation of Agenda 21 and making recommendations for their streamlining.
7. System-wide preparations for intergovernmental meetings in the sustainable development area.
8. Coordination in the field of ocean affairs.
9. Preparations for the twenty-seventh series of Joint Meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination.
10. Provisional agenda for the next meeting.
11. Other matters.
12. Adoption of the report of the meeting.
